Nova Scotia

Office of the Ombudsman

Business Plan 2004 - 2005

Final

March 23, 2004

106-0 5727 /

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Ombudsman ..... Page 3

Mission ..... Page 4

Planning Context ..... Page 4

Strategic Goals ..... Page 5

Core Business Areas ..... Page 6

Priorities ..... Page 7

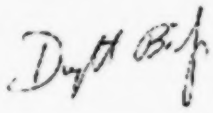
Budget Context ..... Page 9

Outcomes and Measures ..... Page 9

Message from the Ombudsman

Our objective is to improve the administration of public services, to enhance public confidence and to promote fairness, integrity, and balance within administrative practices. The Office must be impartial, accessible, credible and flexible to achieve these stated objectives. We will continue to review and evaluate our processes against our goals to ensure quality service.

Significant plans and initiatives for the 2004/05 fiscal year include continuing to develop the role of the Children's Section in order to provide a proactive complaints resolution mechanism for youth in care and custody of the provincial government, and to oversee the child serving systems of government. We intend to expedite resolution of concerns stemming from adult correctional facilities, and will give consideration to enhancing our presence in such institutions. Priority will be placed on developing measures to increase awareness of the role of the Office, with particular attention to senior citizens, Black, Aboriginal and new immigrant communities.



Dwight Bishop
Ombudsman

A. Mission

To advance administrative fairness, good governance and natural justice in the delivery of municipal and provincial public services by ensuring the concerns of all citizens - including youth in the care and custody of the municipal and provincial governments - are addressed through an independent, objective, review mechanism.

B. Planning Context

The Ombudsman is established as an Officer of the House of Assembly, a commissioner for investigations. The Office of the Ombudsman investigates complaints arising from the administration of provincial or municipal laws within Nova Scotia. The Office of the Ombudsman may also initiate investigations of administrative activities and practices, referred to as an "Own Motion Investigation" or matters referred to it by the "Committee of the House".

In 2002/03, the Office of the Ombudsman addressed 845 jurisdictional complaints, and conducted 25 formal investigations of municipal or provincial governments. In addition, 572 non-jurisdictional inquiries were redirected to the proper authorities. The Children's Section received 613 jurisdictional complaints from, or about, children and youth in custody, conducted 13 investigations/reviews and released 26 monthly reports to the Department of Justice on custody issues. An important component of the Children's Section work is the proactive monthly visitation process established for the youth correctional facilities. In December 2003, a Secure Care Facility operated by the Department of Community Services opened and the proactive visitation process expanded to this facility.

Public education measures will be enhanced to ensure the public is aware of the independent accountability mechanism offered by the Office of the Ombudsman. The Office continues to move in proactive directions through collaboration with other government officials. Progress was made in implementing the complaint resolution process for the Residential Child Caring Facilities. Office of the Ombudsman and Department of Justice representatives are examining measures to expedite resolution of complaints stemming from the adult correctional facilities. Plans will be developed to implement strategies to increase awareness and improve service delivery to specific groups, such as senior citizens, Aboriginal and Black communities and new immigrants.

In January 2004, Dwight L. Bishop was appointed Ombudsman. For the previous three years Mayann Francis held the dual positions of Ombudsman, and Executive Director/CEO of the Human Rights Commission. With the appointment of Mr. Bishop as Ombudsman, with responsibilities solely for the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office will be proceeding with a number of initiatives. These

include stabilizing the workforce from contract to permanent employees, hiring staff to fill vacant positions, relocating the Office and bringing forward amendments to the *Ombudsman Act* required to clarify and maintain the Office's jurisdiction.

In addition to the Ombudsman, the current staff complement consists of the A/Assistant Ombudsman, who has retained her responsibilities of Director of Investigations and has assumed the responsibilities for the Children's Section. There are five contract and two casual employees. The Secretary to the Ombudsman is being filled by a secondment agreement.

C. Strategic Goals

In accomplishing its mission, the Office of the Ombudsman contributes to the Government's priority of fulfilling its role of providing responsible, accountable government.

In order to accomplish its mission, the Office of the Ombudsman has set the following goals for 2004-2005:

1. To ensure all complaints are investigated objectively and thoroughly, in a confidential and timely manner while ensuring administrative fairness and good governance by a responsible and accountable government.

2. To increase citizens' access to, and awareness of, the Office of the Ombudsman through communication and improved accessibility.

3. To improve the administration of Public Services by identifying specific and systemic issues, making appropriate recommendations, and monitoring compliance.

The goals of the Office of the Ombudsman reflect those identified by the Province of Nova Scotia:

- provide for responsive, efficient and effective service to the public at a sustainable cost;
- continue to address issues of administrative fairness, good governance and natural justice
- continuously provide staff with the education, skills and knowledge about current practices, policies and procedures;
- educate the Public Service on the principles of administrative fairness and good governance to ensure a more efficient and professional Public Service; and
- strengthen administrative processes within and among provincial and municipal government departments and agencies.

D. Core Business Areas

- Receive and investigate complaints filed by citizens against provincial and municipal government departments, agencies, boards and commissions and work with departments and agencies to improve the administrative services.

- Advise citizens, including youth and elderly, and provide a voice for children and youth in care and custody of municipal and provincial governments of their right to access internal departmental and external complaint mechanisms, and of their right to access the Office of the Ombudsman.

- Recommend and monitor amendments to policies, procedures and legislation that adhere to the principles of administrative fairness for citizens, including youth in the care and custody of municipal and provincial governments. Through the recommending and monitoring component, the Office of the Ombudsman advises and educates citizens, including youth in the care and custody of municipal and provincial governments, elected officials and employees of the Public Service, of the principles of administrative fairness and good governance.

E. Priorities

The priorities set out in this business plan were developed based on a budget allocation of $909,000 for the 2004-2005 fiscal year. (see schedule 1). In the event this Office does not receive the requested funding, our stated objectives for youth and for the adult correctional facilities will not be met.

Priorities identified by the Office of the Ombudsman for 2004-2005 are:

- **Provide a complaint resolution process that ensures all citizens' complaints, including those from youth in the care and custody of municipal and provincial governments, are investigated professionally, objectively, thoroughly, and in a confidential and timely manner.**

Our strategy to accomplish this priority is to:

- review and monitor the complaint resolution process for efficiency and effectiveness in meeting client needs and/or expectations.
- develop a standardized approach to investigations.
- expand the responsibility of the Children's Section to cover all aspects of the child serving systems of government.
- develop a communication strategy to introduce and implement the complaints resolution process developed for youth in care .
- develop a strategy to increase presence and to improve service delivery to the adult correctional facilities.
- conduct systemic reviews or audits of issues identified by computer data tracking systems.

- **Undertake a more proactive role through educating and increasing the awareness of citizens, children, youth, elected officials and employees of the Public Service, of the right to access the Ombudsman's independent, objective review/complaint resolution mechanism and the principles of administrative fairness and good governance.**

Our strategy to accomplish this priority is to:

- provide citizens, including youth in the care and custody of municipal and provincial governments, with access to the Ombudsman's toll-free inquiry lines.
- conduct speaking engagements, information and training sessions, focus groups, audits and regular site visits for citizens, including youth in the care and custody of municipal and provincial governments, senior citizens, elected officials and employees of the

Public Service on the role and mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman.

- stabilize the staff by moving from contract to permanent positions.
- increase the expertise of employees responsible for the administration of the *Ombudsman Act* through training initiatives.
- develop and implement strategies to increase awareness and improve service delivery to specific groups, such as the senior citizens, Aboriginal and Black communities and new immigrants.
- act as liaison among and between municipal, provincial, and federal departments, thereby improving the interaction among various departments and levels of government.

Provide a service that includes a proactive role while maintaining independence from government to ensure public confidence in our investigations.

Our strategy to accomplish this priority is to:

- communicate to government officials the availability of Office of the Ombudsman staff to conduct presentations and reviews of draft of internal polices and procedures.
- request and participate in information sessions offered by various government departments to further enhance staff's knowledge and understanding of the programs and their administration within government.
- upon request, review draft and internal polices and procedures to provide input on administrative fairness and good governance in the delivery of government programs and services.
- develop and implement a complaints resolution process developed to respond to specific groups, such as the senior citizens, Aboriginal and Black communities and new immigrants.
- increase presence and to improve service delivery to the adult correctional facilities
- continue to develop a mutual relationship of trust and respect with government authorities to ensure acceptance of recommendations arising from independent and confidential investigations and reports.

M. Budget Context

(see attached schedule 1)

N. Outcomes and Measures

(see attached template)

Schedule 1

Office of the Ombudsman Estimated Budget Expenditures	
Core Business	2003-2004 Actual
	$ Thousands
Administration, Support & Investigation	$502.00
Children's Section	$258.80
Total - Gross Current	$760.00
Total - Program Expenses Net of Recoveries	$760.00
Salaries and Benefits	$635.60
Funded Staff (FTE's)	12.0

Office of the Ombudsman Estimated Budget Expenditures	
Core Business	2004-2005
	$ Thousands
Administration, Investigation & Children's Section	$915.00
Total - Gross Current	$915.00
Total - Program Expenses Net of Recoveries	$915.00
Salaries and Benefits	$683.60
Funded Staff (FTE's)	12.0

Core Business Area: Advise of the right to access complaint resolution mechanism				
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA**	**TARGET-2004-05**	**STRATEGIES to achieve target**
Mechanism in place to ensure that concerns of citizens are handled in a manner that is fair, appropriate and cost-effective	Number of contacts by citizens, including children in care/custody	Base line in 2001-02 1700 2002-03 1800	15% increase	Maintain or increase current staff levels, skills and expertise; increase frequency and tailor training
				Convert staff to permanent status to improve stability
				Monitor and enhance citizens' access to this office
				Monitor and enhance effectiveness of communication materials
				Complete enhancements to internal database

Core Business Area: Advise of the right to access complaint resolution mechanism				
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA**	**TARGET-2004-05**	**STRATEGIES to achieve target**
	Number of citizens, including children in care/custody attending information sessions and presentations	Base line in 2001-02 485 citizens attended the sessions	15% increase	Increase presence throughout the province through increased information sessions and outreach initiatives
				Enhance communication materials and methods of publicity

Core Business Area: ***Receive and Investigate Complaints***				
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA**	**TARGET-2004-05**	**STRATEGIES to achieve target**
An efficient and effective complaint resolution process	Timely completion of both assessment and formal investigation process	base line 2001 - 02 Assessment process: 3 weeks	2.5 weeks	Complete database for rapid retrieval of information
				Ensure sufficient number of staff to handle complaints
				Develop and maintain expertise of staff by increase frequency of training and by tailoring training specifically to Ombudsman's investigations status
		base line 2001 - 02 Formal Investigation process: 12 months 2002-03 14months	12 months*	Conduct effective, objective and thorough investigations. Review information received to identify and investigate systemic issues
				Educate government officials on the role and mandate of the Office
				Conduct information sessions on role and mandate of the Office

Office of the Ombudsman

Core Business Area: ***Receive and Investigate Complaints***				
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA**	**TARGET-2004-05**	**STRATEGIES to achieve target**
				Educate on principles of administrative fairness

* Revised from 9 months due to staff turnover

Core Business Area:

Recommend and monitor amendments to policies, procedures and legislation and provide educational materials

OUTCOME	MEASURE	DATA	TARGET-2004-05	STRATEGIES to achieve target
Increased government awareness of potential for improvements to services and strategies to achieve these goals	Number of cases successfully completed through audits and recommendations	Base line in 2001-02 100	100	Review effectiveness of policies, procedures and legislation
				Offer services for information sessions to government services from which high numbers of complaints are received
	Number of cases successfully closed with exit interviews	25 interviews conducted, results being analyzed by national organization	Planning underway to expanding use of exit interviews	Review information received to identify and investigate systemic issues Conduct "exit" interviews with youth prior to their release from detention facilities
	Parties with enhanced understanding of relevant issues following consultations on development and implementation of law and policy	Pro-active consultations with Department of Justice (Adult and Youth Facilities) and Community Services are ongoing	Pro-active consultations with Department of Justice (Adult and Youth Facilities) and Community Services are ongoing	Ensure participation in consultations relating to government services
				Enhance or maintain staff education
	Access to and knowledge of website	improvements were made to the website	complete construct of the Children's Section website	Improve and enhance content as needed

Core Business Area:

Recommend and monitor amendments to policies, procedures and legislation and provide educational materials

OUTCOME	MEASURE	DATA	TARGET-2004-05	STRATEGIES to achieve target
				Monitor the number of site visits
Increased government awareness of potential for improvements to services and strategies to achieve these goals	Information disseminated through sessions, brochures and kits provided	Base line in 2002-02 700 2000-03 2500*	2000	Provide information sessions & presentations
				Record number of requests Develop & improve communication material

* A new brochure was created and therefore a high volume was created.